

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 1, 2005

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**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RECOGNIZES NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH WEEK 2005**

(Richmond, Va.)— The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) is recognizing April 4-11 as National Public Health Week (NPHW) by reaching out to communities and encouraging Virginians to “Live Stronger, Longer,” through healthy living.

Chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, cancer, and diabetes are the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. Factors that contribute to chronic disease include the use of tobacco products, physical inactivity, poor nutrition, failure to utilize screening and early detection services, improper care of an existing health condition, as well as age, gender, and race.

“Chronic diseases are among the most serious and prevalent health problems,” said State Health Commissioner Robert B. Stroube, M.D., M.P.H. “However, they are also among the most preventable,” said Dr. Stroube.

Adopting healthy behaviors such as eating nutritious foods, being physically active and avoiding tobacco use can prevent or help control many of the devastating effects of chronic diseases. These conditions can also be managed more effectively and with less serious consequences if they are detected early. VDH strongly recommends Virginians to visit their health care provider regularly for physical examinations that include screening tests.

Chronic disease also negatively impacts the economy. Individuals with chronic illnesses now comprise the national healthcare system’s largest, most expensive, and fastest growing service group. The medical care expenses of people with chronic diseases account for more than 75 percent of the nation's \$1.4 trillion medical care costs.

“Given the severe consequences that chronic disease poses for Virginia’s economy and to the quality of life of its residents, the Commonwealth cannot afford to ignore the urgency of seeking new avenues to address these ominous trends,” said State Board of Health Chairman Jack O. Lanier, Dr. P.H.

The State Board of Health recently announced its plan make the prevention and control of chronic disease its top priority. The Board will kick off its initiative at its quarterly meeting in Roanoke on Monday, April 4. The meeting will be held in conjunction with the Chronic Disease conference, sponsored by VDH and the Board. Following its meeting, the Board will also visit the Kuumba Community Health and Wellness Center for a brief tour and staff presentation.

**MEDIA OUTLETS:** Contact the VDH Regional Public Information Officers to find out how health departments in your area are celebrating National Public Health Week (see names at top). To find out more about chronic disease in Virginia, log onto [www.vdh.virginia.gov](http://www.vdh.virginia.gov)

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